

Blamed for Collapse in 1959, Mazeroski Becomes Bucs 'Hero'

Special to The New York Times.

PITTSBURGH, Oct. 13—The series-winning home run Bill Mazeroski hit against the Yankees today completed the erasure of the only blot on the record of this fine young player.

In 1959, Pittsburgh's wild-eyed fans were much more steamed up over the pennant prospects of their Pirates than this season. On their arrival in Pittsburgh for the home season's opener, the Pirates were greeted by thousands at the airport and cheered by thousands more in a torchlight parade that wound up long after midnight.

Last year's bright pennant hopes didn't materialize. Never in serious contention, the Pirates, a strong second in 1958, were a disappointing fourth.

In such a situation, irate supporters of the team weren't long in fixing blame. Much of it was heaped on Mazeroski. From a productive .275 hitter in 1958, he slumped to a .241 average. His fielding at second base also fell off badly.

Married the preceding October and also active on the dinner circuit the preceding winter, he had let his weight get out of hand. At bat and in the field he was just a parody of the fine player he had been the three preceding seasons.

His poor showing fired his resolve. Back at his normal weight of 185 pounds when 1960 spring training opened, he again was a driving, slashing hitter and fielder who set the standard of excellence for second-base play in the National League.

Just turned 24, although he has put in five full seasons in the major leagues, all with Pittsburgh, Mazeroski had only one regret concerning his big moment.

"I only wish my dad had been alive to see it. He was a fine

ball player himself and was all set to get a trial with the Cleveland Indians when he lost part of his right foot in a mining accident," Mazeroski said. (Lou Mazeroski, his father, died about a year ago of cancer.)

Born on Sept. 5, 1936, in Wheeling, W. Va., but now a resident of Pittsburgh, Mazeroski has been in the Pirate organization all his baseball life.

An outstanding baseball and basketball player at Warren High in Titusville, Ohio, Mazeroski broke in with Williamsport of the Eastern League in 1954. He also played for Hollywood of the Pacific Coast League en route to Forbes Field, where he arrived to stay in 1956.

Nicknamed No Touch by his team-mates because of his deftness in getting the ball away on double-play relays, he has been the National League's All-Star second baseman for three straight years — although he would be the first to admit he hardly deserved the honor in 1959.

Handsome in a sharp-featured way, the crew-cut, brown-haired, brown-eyed Mazeroski married Milene Nicholson on Oct. 11, 1958. Danny Murtaugh, the Pirate manager, played Cupid in his player's romance with Milene, a front-office employee of the Pittsburgh club.

One rainy day when the Pirates were waiting for the weather to clear enough for them to get to their cars without a soaking, Mazeroski saw Milene—and was visibly impressed.

But he was too bashful to do anything about it until Murtaugh practically dragged him by the hand and introduced him. Only then did Bill speak for himself.

He thanked Murtaugh again today, with his booming bat.